

Reading the Gospels as Literature

Introduction **April 12, 2012**

In this series, we will be reading the Gospels as literary works.

1. This week, we're looking at the gospels, when they were written, the similarities and differences between them, and the views of Jesus we find in them.
2. For each of the next four weeks, we'll read one gospel in its entirety and compare it to the others.
3. On the last week, we'll wrap things up, looking at the gospels as a collection and also referring to other gospels and stories about Jesus.

Crisis literature

1. In times of crisis, communities and individuals often feel compelled to find a way to preserve their stories for people who may survive the crisis, or who have not yet been born, or who don't know them but may discover them at some point in the future.
 - a. They gather together stories about who they are, what they believe and what has happened to them.
 - b. The archives may include religious texts as well as secular stories and sometimes also include objects such as carvings, pieces of pottery, woven fabric and paintings that are meaningful to them.
2. Compiling these archives is serious work and requires considerable thought and expertise particularly when the members of a community are not literate. Someone who knows how to read and write must gather together the written texts, if they exist, or, if there are no texts, must compose them.
3. The Hebrew Bible can be understood as a crisis anthology. The Babylonian Exile is the fundamental crisis experience of early Judaism.
 - a. When the Babylonians invaded Israel, they razed the temple in Jerusalem and forcibly deported the priests, scribes, elders, artists, musicians, teachers—all the people whose work defines culture—along with their families and others who were related to them.
 - b. The Hebrew people were allowed to take things with them, including their religious texts, musical instruments and household goods.
 - c. In Babylon, they could do anything that a Babylonian citizen could do. They could practice their trades and crafts. They could own land and build houses. They could marry Babylonians. To all intents and purposes, they appeared to be Babylonians except they were not allowed to leave. It was an elegant and thorough program of forced assimilation.
 - d. The captives faced a profound crisis.
 - i. Jerusalem was the focal point for both their identity as a nation and their religious life.
 - ii. They believed that God lived in the temple, in the Ark of the Covenant.
 - iii. One of the essential questions they grappled with was what had happened to God. How could the Babylonians have been so victorious unless they had defeated God? Had God died in the temple? If God had not been killed, where was he? Did God

- know where his people were now? Was God able to hear them and to care about them?
- iv. In time, with some help from the prophet Jeremiah, who was not taken into exile but who wrote to them, offering encouragement, the Hebrew leaders came to understand that even without a temple, God was alive and still knew them. Even without sacrifices and rituals, God recognized who they were and what was happening to them.
 - v. They resolved to survive as a culture within Babylon. One of the ways they did this was that the scribes and religious leaders assembled their stories, songs and poems, editing them together so that they could be understood by people who were not immersed in their religious tradition or who had no memory of life in Israel.
4. The gospels are also crisis literature. They were written in response to the Roman destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in 70 C.E. and the separation of the early Christians from the synagogues.

After Jesus died

1. When Jesus died, his followers expected him to return as the “son of Adam,” the cosmic figure described in Daniel 7. Jesus’ followers moved to Jerusalem so as to be there when the kingdom arrived. They believed that the temple would be the centre of the new order that was to come.
2. As time went on, and Jesus did not return, his followers began to create written records of things they’d remembered him saying and doing.
 - a. The earliest gospels known to us are collections of Jesus’ sayings.
 - b. They were written down around 50-60 CE.
 - c. One of the earliest gospels was the Sayings Gospel Q (more about this in a few moments).
 - d. Another, the Gospel of Thomas, was known to have existed, though there was no surviving copy of it.
 - i. In 1945, a copy of the Gospel of Thomas was found as part of a large collection of ancient religious texts known as the Nag Hammadi Library, after the Egyptian city near which it was found.
 - ii. The gospel was actually a Coptic translation of the original, which was probably written in Greek.
 - iii. Fragments of the gospel had been found about 1900, but until the Coptic text of Thomas was available, the identity of the fragments was unknown.
3. Jerusalem
 - a. The Romans had first become involved in Judea in 63 BCE when Rome made Syria a province.

“Known Gospels and Gospel Materials”

Roman Empire map

- b. King Herod “the Great” was named “King of the Jews” by the Roman Senate in 40 BCE, though he did not gain military control of Judea until three years later.
 - c. One of Herod the Great’s major acts was the complete renovation and expansion of the Second Temple, built in 520 BCE. The work was undertaken in 19 BCE.
 - d. Herod the Great died in 4 BCE, and was succeeded by his son, Herod Archelaus, who ruled until 6 CE when he was dismissed by the Roman Emperor Augustus who replaced him with Herod Antipas who ruled until 39 CE when he was deposed by the Emperor Caligula.
 - e. Judea was autonomous between 41 and 44 when Emperor Claudius made Herod Agrippa the King of the Jews. He ruled over Judea until 100 CE.
4. The destruction of Jerusalem
- a. The Herods were Jews who ruled Judea at the pleasure of the Roman Emperor. An imperial procurator was also appointed to maintain peace and collect taxes in the area.
 - b. In 39, Emperor Caligula declared himself a god and ordered statues of himself to be set up in temples throughout the empire. The Jews refused and began to prepare for open revolt.
 - c. The first Jewish-Roman War, sometimes called the Great Rebellion was from 66-73, stemming from Greek and Jewish religious tension.
 - d. Jerusalem was besieged early in the war. The siege turned into a stalemate as the Romans were unable to breach the city’s defenses.
 - e. It ended when legions under Titus besieged and destroyed Jerusalem, looted and burned Herod's Temple (in the year 70) and Jewish strongholds (notably Gamla in 67 and Masada in 73), and enslaved or massacred a large part of the Jewish population.
5. Early Christians
- a. The early Christians regarded themselves as Jews. The Jesus movement was just one of several competing sects and had no intention of breaking away from Judaism.
 - b. Historians of the time, notably Tacitus, Josephus and Suetonius, all note that there was a surge of revolutionary religiosity before and after the Great Rebellion.
 - c. In Jerusalem, the members of the Jesus movement worshipped together every day in the temple.
 - i. They also met together for meals in which they affirmed their faith in the kingdom’s imminent arrival.
 - ii. They continued to live as devout, orthodox Jews.
 - iii. They had no private property, shared their goods equally and dedicated their lives to the last days.
 - iv. They continued to revere the Torah, keep the Sabbath and observed the dietary laws.
 - v. Their relationship to the temple was somewhat ambiguous since they believed that Jesus had promised to dismantle the temple entirely.
 - d. Early Christianity was highly controversial in other ways.

- i. Jesus had been executed like a common criminal, which was a source of embarrassment. How could he have been God's Anointed?
 - ii. The movement claimed that sinners, prostitutes and tax collectors would enter the kingdom ahead of the priests. This was seen as a sign of moral laxity.
 - iii. Christian missionaries preached about Jesus' imminent return in religiously dubious areas such as Samaria and Gaza. They also established congregations in the diaspora—in Damascus, Phoenicia, Cilicia and Antioch.
 - iv. Although the early Christians preached about Jesus to other Jews, they had particular success in attracting gentile converts, especially among the so-called "God-fearers."
 - (1) God-fearers were pagan sympathizers who worshipped with the Jews but did not fully convert to Judaism.
 - (2) They continued to worship other gods and to participate in the local religions.
 - (3) Conversion to Judaism required circumcision, observing the whole Torah, including the dietary laws, and giving up the worship of other gods.
 - (4) There was controversy about how gentile converts could be admitted to the Jesus movement. Should they convert to Judaism, first?
6. Paul
- a. Paul of Tarsus was a Greek-speaking Jew from Tarsus in Cilicia who joined the Jesus movement about three years after Jesus' death.
 - b. He had never known Jesus personally, and had initially been hostile to the sect.
 - c. A personal revelation convinced him that Christ had appointed him to be the apostle to the gentiles.
 - d. He travelled widely in the diaspora and founded congregations in Syria, Asia Minor and Greece, determined to spread the gospel to the ends of the earth before Jesus returned..
 - e. He wrote letters to his converts, answering their questions, encouraging them, and explaining the faith.
 - i. Seven of his letters have survived and are deemed to be authentically his: Galatians, 1 Thessalonians, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Philemon, Philippians and Romans.
 - ii. After Paul died in the early 60s (likely by execution in Rome), others who followed Paul wrote in his name, developing some of his ideas in letters to the churches in Ephesus and Colossae. They also wrote supposedly posthumous letters to his associates Timothy and Titus.
 - f. Paul insisted that gentile converts must become monotheistic, worshipping only the God of Israel. But they did not have to convert to Judaism.
 - i. Jesus had already made them "children of God" without circumcision and the Torah.
 - ii. They were to live as though the kingdom had already arrived: taking care of the poor, behaving with charity, sobriety, chastity and modesty.
 - g. Paul apparently did not know of any of the events of Jesus' life other than that he had gathered a group of disciples, had a table fellowship practice, died and was raised from the dead.
 - h. For Paul, the most important thing was that Jesus was the first fruit of creation, the one who opened the resurrection which he, as a Pharisee, had always expected, to everyone.

- i. Paul never says that Jesus was God. For him, Jesus' faithfulness is a model for humankind.
- j. Jerusalem and the temple were still standing when Paul died in 64. Yet he never mentions the temple in his writing.

The New Testament

1. If the collection of texts we call the New Testament is more unified than those of the Hebrew Bible, it is because they were composed over a much shorter period of time by people who had a number of experiences in common, or those experiences were within recent memory.
2. There are two dominant strands of material in the New Testament.
 - a. Gospels
 - i. The four canonical gospels (Mark, Matthew, Luke and John)
 - ii. The non-canonical gospels, at least one of which pre-dates Mark, the earliest canonical Gospel, by about 20 years. (The Sayings Gospel Q and the Gospel of Thomas; others may be dated earlier or later.)
 - b. Epistles
 - i. The epistles can also be broken into two different groups
 - ii. The epistles of Paul of Tarsus, all of which were written before the canonical gospels
 - iii. The rest of the epistles, most of which, other than 1 Peter and the Letter of James, were written after the four canonical gospels had been written.
 - c. All of the gospels and epistles were written at least 20 years after Jesus' death.
 - d. The entire New Testament canon, as we have it, relies on gospels and epistles that were written over a 75 year period, between the years 50 and 125.
 - e. The extra-canonical material—gospels, epistles, sayings and fragments of manuscripts—that scholars use in their study of the New Testament was all composed over less than 150 years, between 50 and about 200 CE.
3. The gospels focus on stories about what Jesus did during his life. They are intended to be missionary documents for the conversion of those who read or hear them.
4. The epistles focus on the meaning of Jesus' life, death and resurrection, as well as on events and issues arising in the life of the earliest Christian churches.
5. The New Testament also includes the Book of Acts, whose authorship is ascribed to Luke and Revelation, which is a piece of apocalyptic literature.

"Apostolic Writings"
and "Stages in the
Development"

The Synoptic Problem

1. The scholarly discussion of the life of Jesus begins with the four canonical gospels, and tries to understand the reasons for their similarities and differences.

2. Matthew, Mark and Luke can be read side-by-side, or synoptically. They have many similarities, follow much the same structure and frequently report events in Jesus' ministry in the same order.
3. The gospel of John, however, is arranged differently and is of a different type. It is apparent that the Synoptic Gospels bear a relationship to each other, and that the fourth gospel stands largely outside of this relationship.
4. The attempts to understand the nature of the relationship between the Synoptic Gospels is known as *the synoptic problem*.
5. The similarities between the Synoptics cannot be accounted for by appeals to the nature of oral history.
 - a. Oral histories may offer similar accounts of events, and also may ascribe similar meaning to events and people.
 - b. They do not usually use the same words for things, or interrupt one story in the same place in order to tell another.
 - c. For example, Matthew and Mark both interrupt their narrative of Jesus' ministry to go back in time to give an account of the death of John the Baptizer, for example, and they do so at exactly the same point in their narratives (Mt. 14:3-17 = Mk 6:17-29).

Sources for the Gospels

1. Scholars today generally agree that Mark was the first gospel.
 - a. It is the shortest of all of the gospels.
 - b. It does not include an account of Jesus' birth and it ends with the disciples running away in terror from the empty tomb.
 - c. It also uses less sophisticated language than Matthew and Luke, which suggests that Matthew and Luke cleaned up, or improved upon, Mark's language.
2. Matthew and Luke have sayings in common which do not appear in Mark.
 - a. These common sayings are referred to as "the Q document" (from the German *Quelle*, "source") or "Q"--a hypothetical document of sayings attributed to Jesus.
 - b. Q is believed to have been written in Greek, since the language style of the material common to both Matthew and Luke is almost identical, and therefore it is unlikely that it is translated from Aramaic.
3. The Q theory predates the discovery in 1947 of the Gospel of Thomas at Nag Hammadi, another sayings gospel which has many similarities to the Synoptics, and, like Q, does not include a birth narrative, a passion narrative, or descriptions of the major events in Jesus' life.

"An Example of the Q Source"

4. Matthew is considered to be the second gospel, written by someone who was already working from a copy of Mark's gospel as well as a copy of Q.
5. Luke is considered to have been written by someone who also had copies of Mark and Q.

Additional Gospel Material

1. There is material in Matthew which does not appear in any other gospel.
2. There is also material in Luke which is not found elsewhere.
3. Chief among these are the two very different accounts of Jesus' birth.
4. Matthew and Luke each appear to have had additional sources for their material. There are certainly quite a number of gospels and fragments of texts known today which serve as resources for translations and interpretations of texts.

The Gospels as Narratives with a Purpose

1. All of the gospels reflect the anxiety of the period after the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem.
 - a. There was general turmoil among the Jewish people.
 - b. The war with Rome had already divided families and communities.
 - c. The destruction of the temple meant that all of the Jewish sects had to re-think their relationship with the temple tradition.
 - d. The early Christians saw the destroyed temple as a sign. They felt compelled to proclaim Jesus as the messiah whose mission had been bound up with the temple itself.
2. Mark's community was deeply troubled.
 - a. His gospel may have been written partly as a way to remind believers of the things that Jesus had done and to encourage them to feel a sense of hope that the last days were finally upon them.
 - b. Christians had been accused of rejoicing over the destruction of the temple.
 - c. Mark shows that members of his community were being beaten in the synagogues, dragged before the Jewish elders and oppressed everywhere.
 - d. Many had lost faith.
 - e. There was a powerful sense of rupture with mainstream Judaism.
 - i. You cannot patch an old garment with new cloth
 - ii. No one puts new wine into old wineskins.
 - iii. Discipleship meant endless struggle with demonic forces.
 - f. Mark is the master framer of the gospels.
 - i. His gospel is the shortest of the four, at 16 chapters
 - ii. The tight structure that emphasizes the sense of the story's importance.
 - iii. It begins with John the Baptizer's appearance and Jesus' baptism.

- iv. “Immediately” is one of the most frequently-used words. Its repetition conveys tension, urgency, and the impression that everything is happening very quickly, as though impelled by some barely-contained force.
 - v. Jesus is portrayed as constantly on the move. He has no home, but is endlessly traveling from place to place. The crowds follow him, wanting him to heal the sick and cast out demons. They press in on him to the point where he can’t even eat in peace.
 - vi. His family worries about him, fearing that the stress is too much for him and that he’s going mad.
 - vii. He performs many miracles, healing the sick, and casting out demons. He usually tells those whom he’s healed not to tell anyone what has happened, though they don’t obey his orders.
 - viii. His disciples increasingly fail to understand what he’s talking about or why he’s doing what he does. They begin to seem almost as burdensome as the crowds.
 - ix. In the end, the disciples all fall asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane, though he’d asked them to stay awake with him, and seem to rouse only when Jesus is arrested. After the arrest, they all run away.
 - x. Jesus’ is tried and convicted at night, with none of his followers nearby. He is flogged and crucified without them there to witness any of it.
 - xi. The women find that the tomb is empty on Easter morning, but are frightened by the experience and they, too, run away in terror.
 - g. Mark’s story is imbued with the sense of fearful expectancy that Christians experience during the time immediately after the fall of the temple. The gospel is almost brutally terse, uncompromising in the sense of mounting terror and lack of understanding.
 - h. The gospel is “Good News,” in spite of all of these things because the kingdom of God had already arrived in Jesus.
3. Writing 10-15 years after Mark, Matthew’s message was that the kingdom of God was here, working in the background, like yeast in flour.
- a. His community was accused by their fellow Jews of abandoning the Torah and the prophets. They had been flogged in the synagogues, dragged before tribunals of elders, and expected to be tortured and killed before the End.
 - b. Matthew was intent on showing that Christianity was in harmony with Jewish tradition. Indeed, he aims to demonstrate that everything in Jesus’ life was a fulfilment of the scriptures, showing that Christianity was the culmination of Jewish faith.
 - i. Jesus’ birth was announced by an angel, as was Ishmael, Samson and Isaac.
 - ii. His 40 days of fasting and temptation paralleled the Israelites’ 40 years in the wilderness.
 - iii. Isaiah had foretold his miracles.
 - c. Most importantly, Jesus was a great teacher of the Torah. Like Moses, he proclaimed the new law of the messianic age from the mountaintop.
 - i. Jews must observe the Torah more stringently than ever before.
 - (1) Not only must they not kill, but they must not even get angry.

- (2) Not only was adultery forbidden, but a man could not even look at a woman lustfully.
 - (3) The law of retaliation—an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth—was overturned. Jews must now turn the other cheek and love their enemies.
 - ii. Like the prophet Hosea, Jesus claimed that compassion was more important than ritual observance.
 - iii. Like his contemporary, Rabbi Hillel, he preached the Golden Rule.
 - d. When Matthew's gospel was written, the Pharisees were urging the people to devote themselves to the study of the Torah. They promised that whenever two or three gathered together to study, they would encounter the Shekhinah—the divine presence—that they had formerly met in the temple.
 - e. Jesus countered the Pharisees, saying that whenever two or three gathered together in his name, he would be with them. Jesus had replaced the temple and the Torah.
4. Luke, who wrote the Book of Acts as well as the gospel, was also concerned to show that Jesus and his followers were devout Jews.
- a. Luke emphasized that the gospel was for everyone: Jews and gentiles; women as well as men; the poor; tax collectors; the good Samaritan and the prodigal son.
 - b. “Christian *peshet* was a spiritual discipline, rooted in grief and bewilderment, which spoke directly to the heart and set it alight. Christians would gather ‘in twos and threes’ and discuss the relationship of the Law and the prophets to Jesus. As they conversed together, the texts ‘opened’ and yielded a momentary illumination. This would pass, just as Jesus vanished as soon as he had been recognized, but afterwards apparent contradictions locked together in a numinous intimation of wholeness.” (Armstrong, *Bible*, 73)
 - c. Luke offers an example of *peshet* study in the story of two disciples who encountered a stranger as they were walking along the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus three days after Jesus' crucifixion.
 - i. The disciples were distraught and despondent, like many of Luke's community. The stranger asked them what had happened.
 - ii. They explained that they were followers of Jesus, whom they were certain was the Messiah. But he had been crucified three days earlier. Some women in their group were telling strange stories about an empty tomb and a vision of angels.
 - iii. The stranger corrected them. The Messiah must suffer before entering his glory. Beginning with Moses, he began to tell them the “full message” of the prophets.
 - iv. When they reached the disciples' home, they urged the stranger to stay with them. When he broke the bread at dinner, they suddenly realized that they had been in Jesus' presence all along. As he vanished from their sight, they recalled how their hearts had “burned” within them when he “opened the scriptures.”
 - d. In Luke's community, the stranger played a crucial role. Confiding in someone they had never seen before was an act of faith. Jews and gentiles found that when they reached out to the “other” they experienced the Shekhinah, which they came to identify with Christ.
5. For John, Judaism was over. Jesus had replaced every one of God's revelations to Israel.

- a. The risen Logos would be the place where Jews would encounter the divine presence. Jesus would take over the function of the ruined temple.
- b. When Jesus walked out of the temple, the Shekhinah withdrew with him.
- c. In distinction from the feast of Sukkoth, when water was ceremonially poured over the altar and the giant torches in the temple were set alight, Jesus declared himself to be the living water and the light of the world.
- d. On the feast of the Unleavened Bread, Jesus claimed that he was the “bread of life.”
- e. Unlike the synoptics, John never showed Jesus attracting non-Jewish converts.
- f. John’s community was probably entirely Jewish at the beginning.

Christian Anti-Judaism in the Gospels

1. A ribbon of hatred and fear is woven through the New Testament.
 - a. It is inaccurate to speak of this as anti-Semitic since the authors were Jewish, but many of them had become disenchanted with the Jewish religion.
 - b. Paul did not share this hostility towards Judaism
 - c. The widespread suspicion, anxiety and turbulence of the period immediately following the destruction of the temple is reflected through much of the New Testament.
2. Determined to reach out to the gentile world, the synoptics were eager to absolve the Romans of their responsibility for Jesus’s execution.
 - a. With increasing urgency, the gospel writers claimed that the Jews must share the blame.
 - b. Even Luke, who had the most positive view of Judaism, showed a good Israel (portrayed by Jesus’s followers) and a bad one (portrayed by the self-righteous Pharisees).
 - c. Matthew has the crowd cry out for Jesus’s death, saying, “His blood be upon us and our children.” These words inspired the pogroms that made anti-Semitism an incurable disease in Europe.
3. Matthew was infuriated by the Pharisees, whom he sees as hypocrites, obsessed with the letter of the Law while neglecting its spirit. He says they are “blind guides,” a “brood of vipers” intent on the destruction of the Christian churches.
4. John also denounced the Pharisees as malicious, oppressive and chronically addicted to evil. He shows the Pharisees as the ones who gathered information against Jesus and thereby engineered his death.
5. For awhile after the destruction of the Temple, the Christians had made a serious effort to be the authentic voice of Judaism.
 - a. Initially, it seemed that they had no rivals.
 - b. By the 90s, it seemed that something extraordinary was happening. The Pharisees were beginning a remarkable revival.

Stages in the Development of the Early Christian Tradition

1-30 C.E.

John the Baptist,
precursor and mentor of Jesus
(died about 27 C.E.)

Jesus of Nazareth,
travelling sage and wonder-worker
(died about 30 C.E.)

30-60 C.E.

Paul of Tarsus,
chief founder of gentile Christianity
(letters written about 50-60 C.E.)

Sayings Gospel Q
(first edition, about 50 C.E.)

Gospel of Thomas
(first edition, about 50 C.E.)

60-80 C.E.

Signs Gospel
(eventually incorporated into John)

Gospel of Mark,
the first narrative gospel
(first edition, about 70 C.E.)

Didache, first believers' handbook
(first edition)

80-100 C.E.

Gospel of Matthew,
incorporating Mark and Q
(about 80 C.E.)

Gospel of Luke,
incorporating Mark and Q
(about 90 C.E.)

Dialogue of the Saviour
(first edition, probably 50-100 C.E.)

Gospel of Peter
(first edition, probably 50-100 C.E.)

Egerton Gospel
(probably 50-100 C.E.)

Gospel of John,
incorporating the Signs Gospel
(about 90 C.E.)

Gospel of Mark, canonical edition
(about 100 C.E.)

100-150 C.E.

Gospel of John, third edition
(insertions and additions)

Secret Book of James, first edition
(found at Nag Hammadi)

Jewish-Christian Gospels
(preserved in patristic quotations)

100-150 C.E. cont.

Didache, second edition
(insertions and additions)

Gospel of Thomas, second edition
(surviving edition)

Surviving fragment of Gospel of John
(P⁵²)

Surviving fragments of Egerton Gospel
(PEgerton² and PKöln²⁵⁵)

150-325 C.E.

Emergence of four "recognized" gospels

Emergence of an official collection of
Christian writings ("New Testament")

Christianity becomes a legal religion
(313 C.E.)

Council of Nicea
(325 C.E.)

First official creeds

First surviving copies of "Bibles"
(about 325-350 C.E.)

Epistles

Epistles of Paul

First Thessalonians (about 50 CE)

Galatians (late 40s-early 50s CE)

First Corinthians (early 50s CE)

Second Corinthians (a number of fragments of other letters)

Philippians (written from prison, mid-late 60s CE)

Philemon (written from prison, mid-late 60s CE)

Romans (the last letter, written in response to circumstances during Emperor Nero's reign (54-68CE)

Paul was probably beheaded in the time of Emperor Nero in 64 or 67

Pastoral Epistles (advice to followers, have a common Greek vocabulary and style different from the Pauline letters, dated late in the first to early in the second centuries CE)

First Timothy

Second Timothy

Titus

Debated authorship

Colossians (mid 60s to mid 70s CE, written either by Paul, late in his life, or by a disciple of his

Non-Pauline Letters

Ephesians (last 1st century CE, probably based on Colossians, in part)

Second Thessalonians (imitates 1 Thess., probably written in the late first century)

Hebrews (60-90 CE)

James (based on a sermon before James' martyrdom, mid-60s; edited and distributed late 80s or 90s)

Jude (late first century CE)

1 John (all Johannine letters were written ca. 100 CE)

2 John

3 John

1 Peter (70-90 CE)

2 Peter (100-150 CE)

Revelation

Revelation is an apocalyptic text, drawing on material written before the fall of Jerusalem in 70.

The book as we have it was written near the end of the reign of Emperor Domitian (81-96)

Known Gospels and Gospel Materials

found in a variety of manuscripts

Narrative Gospels

Gospel of Mark
Gospel of Matthew
Gospel of Luke
Signs Gospel (hypothetical)
Gospel of John

Sayings Gospels

Sayings Gospel Q (hypothetical)
Gospel of Thomas
Greek Fragments of Thomas
Secret Book of James
Dialogue of the Saviour
Gospel of Mary

Infancy Gospels

Infancy Gospel of Thomas
Infancy Gospel of James/Protevangelium

Fragmentary Gospels

Gospel of Peter
Secret Gospel of Mark
Egerton gospel
Gospel Oxyrhynchus 840
Gospel Oxyrhynchus 1224

Jewish-Christian Gospels

Gospel of the Hebrews
Gospel of the Ebionites
Gospel of the Nazoreans

Orphan Sayings and Stories (agrapha)

An Example of the “Q” Source Material

Ask, seek, knock

Luke 11:9-13

¹¹“Ask—it’ll be given to you;
seek—you’ll find;
knock—it’ll be opened for you.

¹²Rest assured:
everyone who asks receives;
everyone who seeks finds;
and for the one who knocks
it is opened.

¹¹Which of you fathers would
hand his son a snake
when it's fish he's asking for?

²³Or a scorpion
when it's an egg he's asking for?

¹³So if you,
worthless as you are,
know how to give your children
good gifts,
isn't it much more likely
that the heavenly Father
will give holy spirit to those
who ask him?”

Matthew 7:7-11

⁷“Ask—it’ll be given to you;
seek—you’ll find;
knock—it’ll be opened for you.

⁸Rest assured
everyone who asks receives;
everyone who seeks finds;
and for the one who knocks
it is opened.

⁹Who among you would hand a son a stone
when it's bread he's asking for?

¹⁰Again, who would
hand him a snake
when it's fish he's asking for?

Of course no one would!

¹¹So if you,
worthless as you are,
know how to give your children
good gifts
isn't it much more likely
that your Father in the heavens
will give good things to those
who ask him?”

Roman Empire at its Greatest Extent 114 CE



Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Roman_Empire_map.svg

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